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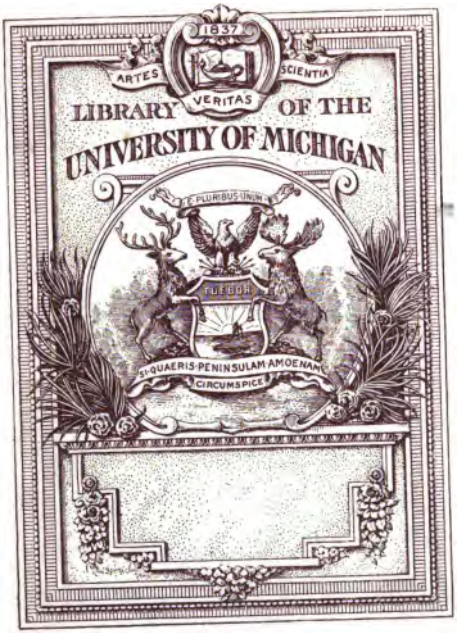
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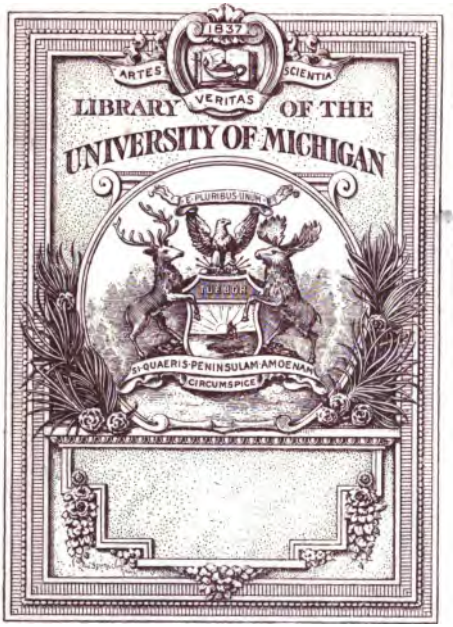
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JOYZELLE

BY

MAURICE MAETERLINCK

TRANSLATED BY

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CHARACTERS

MERLIN

LANCÉOR, *Merlin's Son*

JOYZELLE

ARIELLE, *Merlin's genius, invisible to the others*

[SCENE: *Merlin's Island*

167153

JOYZELLE

ACT I

A Gallery in MERLIN'S *Palace*

[MERLIN *is seated near* ARIELLE, *who is sleeping on the steps of a marble staircase. It is night.*

MERLIN.

You sleep, my Arielle, you my inner force, the neglected power which slumbers in every soul and which I alone, till now, awaken at will. . . . You sleep, my docile and familiar little fairy, and your hair, straying like a blue mist, invisible to men, mingles with the moon, the perfumes of the night, the rays of the stars, the roses that shed their petals, the spreading sky, to remind us thus that nothing separates us from any existing thing and that our thought does not know where the light begins for which it hopes, nor where the shadow ends which it

escapes. . . . You are sleeping soundly and, while you sleep, I lose all my knowledge and become like my blind brethren, who do not yet know that on this earth there are as many hidden gods as there are hearts that throb. . . . Alas, I am to them the genius to be avoided, the wicked sorcerer in league with their enemies! . . . They have no enemies, but only subjects who know not where to find their king. . . . They are persuaded that my secret virtue, which is obeyed by the plants and the stars, by water, stone and fire and to which the future at times reveals some of its features: they are persuaded that this new and yet so human virtue is hidden in philtres, in horrible charms, in hellish herbs and awful signs. . . . No, it is in myself, even as it resides in them; it is in you, my frail Arielle, in you who were once in me. . . . I have taken two or three bolder steps in the dark. . . . I have done a little earlier what they will do later. . . . All things will be subject to them when they have learnt at last to revive your goodwill, even as I have revived it. . . . But it were vain for me to tell them that you are sleeping here and to point to your dazzling grace:

they would not see you. . . . Each one of them must find you within himself; each one of them must open as I do the tomb of his life and come to awake you as I awake you now. . . .

[*He bends over* ARIELLE *and kisses her.*

ARIELLE.

(*Waking.*) Master! . . .

MERLIN.

This is the hour, Arielle, when love must watch. . . . I shall often trouble your sleep in these coming days. . . .

ARIELLE.

My sleep was so long that I am always relapsing into it; but I feel stronger and become happier at each new awakening that your thought imposes on me. . . .

MERLIN.

Whither are you taking my son and when shall I see him again? . . .

ARIELLE.

I was following him with my eyes in my attentive dream. . . . He is approaching us. . . . He thinks that he is lost; and his destiny leads him where happiness awaits him. . . .

MERLIN.

Will he know me? . . . It is many years since the prescribed proof exacted that we should live as strangers to each other; and I am eager to be able to embrace him as I did long ago, when he was a child. . . .

ARIELLE.

No, fate must be allowed to decide freely; nor may the proof be falsified by the love of a father of whose existence he must not know. . . .

MERLIN.

But now that Joyzelle is here, close to us; now that he is coming towards her, does the future become more clear, can you read further into it? . . .

ARIELLE.

(*Gazing upon the sea and the night, in a sort of trance.*) I read in it what I read from the first moment. . . . Your son's fate is wholly inscribed within a circle of love. If he love, if he be loved with a wondrous love, which should be that of all men, but which is becoming so rare that at present it seems to them a dazzling folly; if he love, if he be loved with an ingenuous and yet clear-seeing love, with a love simple and pure and all-powerful as the mountain stream, with an heroic love, yet one that shall be gentler than a flower, with a love which takes all and gives back more than it takes, which never hesitates, which is not deceived; a love which nothing disconcerts and nothing repels, a love which hears and sees naught save a mysterious happiness invisible to all beside, which perceives it everywhere, in every form and every trial, and which, with a smile, will even commit crime to claim it. . . . If he obtain that love, which exists somewhere and is waiting for him in a heart that I seem to have recognized, his life will be longer,

fairer and happier than that of other men. But, if he do not find it before the month is past, for the circle is closing; if Joyzelle's love be not that which the future holds out to him from the high skies; if the flame do not burn its full span, if a regret veil or a doubt obscure it, then death triumphs and your son is lost. . . .

MERLIN.

Ay, for all men the hour of love is an important hour! . . .

ARIELLE.

For Lancéor, alas, it is the inexorable hour! . . . Within these next few days he will reach the summit of his life. With groping hands, he touches happiness and the tomb. . . . He is dependent entirely on the last steps which he is taking and on the act of the virgin who is coming to meet him. . . .

MERLIN.

And if Joyzelle be not she whom fate selects? . . .

ARIELLE.

Indeed, I fear that the proof which we are about to attempt is the only one which it offers; but man must never lose courage in face of the future. . . .

MERLIN.

Why attempt the proof if it be uncertain? . . .

ARIELLE.

If we do not offer it, fate will offer it; it is inevitable, but it is left to chance; and that is why I try to direct its course. . . .

MERLIN.

And if he love Joyzelle and she do not love him with the love which fate demands? . . .

ARIELLE.

Then we shall have to intervene more openly.

MERLIN.

How?

ARIELLE.

I will try to learn.

MERLIN.

Arielle, I conjure you, as this concerns the dearest being, much dearer than myself; as I have only one son and he can become what we well know that I could never be: is it not possible to make an unexampled, an almost desperate effort with regard to the future; to violate time; to snatch from the years, even were they to revenge themselves upon us two, the secret which they conceal so strictly and which contains much more than our own life and our own happiness? . . .

ARIELLE.

No, strive as I may, I can reach no further. . . . The future is a world limited by ourselves, in which we discover only that which concerns us and sometimes, by chance, that which interests those whom we love the most. . . . I

see very clearly all that unfolds itself round Lancéor, until his road meets Joyzelle's road. But around Joyzelle the years are veiled. It is an effulgent veil, a veil of light, but it hides the days as profoundly as a veil of darkness. . . . It interrupts life. Then, beyond the veil, I again find happiness and death awaiting him, like two equal, indifferent, inscrutable hosts ; and I cannot tell which is the nearer, the more imperious. . . . It is not possible for me to know if Joyzelle is the predestined one. . . . Everything promises that it is she, but nothing confirms it. . . . Her face is stretched towards the coming years . . . and, call to her as I may, with all my might, she does not answer, does not turn her head. Nothing can distract her; and I have never seen her features, which I can only imagine. . . . One sign alone is certain: it is that of the very sharp and cruel proofs which she will have to overcome. . . . By these proofs alone we shall know her. . . .

MERLIN.

And, therefore, starting from this point which I can surmount, we must submit to unknown

powers, question facts like other men, await their reply and try to conquer them if they threaten harm to those whom we love. . . .

ARIELLE.

But here they come, in the breaking dawn. . . . Let us hasten away, they are coming near. . . . Let us leave to their destiny, which is beginning its work, the solitude and the silence which it demands.

[*Exeunt* MERLIN *and* ARIELLE. *A few moments after, while the daylight swiftly increases,* JOYZELLE *and* LANCÉOR *enter from opposite sides and meet.*

JOYZELLE.

(*Stopping, astonished, before* LANCÉOR.) What are you seeking?

LANCÉOR.

I do not know where I am. . . . I was seeking a shelter. . . . Who are you?

JOYZELLE.

My name is Joyzelle.

LANCÉOR.

Joyzelle. . . . I am saying the name. . . . It is as caressing as a wing, the breath of a flower, a whisper of gladness, a ray of light. . . . It describes you completely, it sings in the heart, it lights the lips. . . .

JOYZELLE.

And you, who are you?

LANCÉOR.

I no longer myself know who I am. . . . A few days ago, my name was Lancéor; I knew where I was and I knew myself. . . . To-day, I seek myself, I grope within myself and all around me and I wander in the mist, amid mirages. . . .

JOYZELLE.

What mist? What mirages? . . . How long have you been on this island?

LANCÉOR.

Since yesterday. . . .

JOYZELLE.

Strange, they did not tell me. . . .

LANCÉOR.

No one saw me. . . . I was wandering on the shore, I was in despair. . . .

JOYZELLE.

Oh! Why? . . .

LANCÉOR.

I was very far from here, I was very far from him, when a letter told me that my old father was dying. . . . I took ship at once. We were long at sea; then, in the first port at which the ship put in, I learnt that it was too late, that my father was no more. . . . I continued my voyage, at least to be on the scene of his last thoughts and carry out his last wishes. . . .

JOYZELLE.

Why are you here?

LANCÉOR.

Why? I do not know, nor do I know how. . . . The sea was very still and the sky was clear. . . . We saw only the water slumbering in the azure. . . . Suddenly, without warning, the waves were invaded by thick blue mists. . . . They rose like a veil, which clung to our hands, to the rigging, to our faces. . . . Then the wind blew, our anchor broke loose and the blind ship, driven by a current that made her timbers creak, arrived towards evening in the unknown harbour of this unexpected island. . . . Sad and disheartened, I landed on the beach; I fell asleep in a cave overlooking the sea; and, when I awoke, the fog had lifted and I saw the ship disappear like a radiant wing on the horizon of the waves.

JOYZELLE.

What had happened?

LANCÉOR.

I do not know. . . . I would have tried to follow her, but I could find no boat in the

harbour. . . . I must wait, therefore, until another vessel passes. . . .

JOYZELLE.

That is curious. . . . It is like myself. . . .

LANCÉOR.

Like you? . . .

JOYZELLE.

Yes, I too came to the island through a thick fog. . . . But I was shipwrecked. . . .

LANCÉOR.

When was that? And how? . . . Where do you come from, Joyzelle? . . .

JOYZELLE.

I was coming from another island. . . .

LANCÉOR.

Where were you going?

JOYZELLE.

Where some one was awaiting me. . . .

LANCÉOR.

Who?

JOYZELLE.

One whom they had thought right to choose for me. . . .

LANCÉOR.

Were you betrothed? . . .

JOYZELLE.

Yes.

LANCÉOR.

Do you love him? . . .

JOYZELLE.

No.

LANCÉOR.

But then? . . .

JOYZELLE.

My mother wished it. . . .

LANCÉOR.

Do you intend to obey her?

JOYZELLE.

No.

LANCÉOR.

Ah, that is well! . . . I like that! . . . And my father, at the moment of his death, wished that I also should choose her whom he had chosen for me. . . . He had his reasons, very deep and serious reasons, it appears. . . . And, as he wished it and as he is no longer alive, I must obey him. . . .

JOYZELLE.

Why?

LANCÉOR.

We cannot evade the wishes of the dead.

JOYZELLE.

Why?

LANCÉOR.

They can no longer be altered. . . . We must have pity, we must respect them. . . .

JOYZELLE.

No. . . .

LANCÉOR.

You would not obey? . . .

JOYZELLE.

No.

LANCÉOR.

Joyzelle! . . . This is horrible! . . .

JOYZELLE.

No, the dead are horrible, if they want us to love those whom we do not love. . . .

LANCÉOR.

Joyzelle! . . . I am afraid of you. . . .

JOYZELLE.

I said. . . . What did I say? . . . Perhaps I was too quick. . . .

LANCÉOR.

Joyzelle, your eyes are moist at the thought of the dead and belie your words. . . .

JOYZELLE.

No, it is not for them. . . . Perhaps I was harsh. . . . And yet, they are wrong.

LANCÉOR.

Let us speak no more of the dead. . . . You have not told me how your shipwreck . . .

JOYZELLE.

We lost our way in a thick fog. . . . A fog so thick that it filled our hands like white feathers. . . . The pilot mistook the course. . . . He thought he saw a beacon. . . . The ship struck upon a hidden reef. . . . But no one perished. . . . The waves bore me away; and then I saw the blue water glide before my eyes as though I were sinking in a stifling sky. . . . I went down and down. . . . Then some one caught hold of me and I lost consciousness. . . .

LANCÉOR.

Who caught hold of you? . . .

JOYZELLE.

The lord of this island.

LANCÉOR.

And who is this lord? . . .

JOYZELLE.

He is an old man who wanders like a restless shade about this marble palace. . . .

LANCÉOR.

If I had been there! . . .

JOYZELLE.

What would you have done? . . .

LANCÉOR.

I should have saved you! . . .

JOYZELLE.

Was I not saved? . . .

LANCÉOR.

It is not the same thing! . . . You would not have suffered, nothing would have come to you. . . . I should have carried you on the crest of the waves. . . . Ah, I do not know how. . . . Like a cup full of precious pearls, of which not one must be touched by a shadow; like a flower

of the dawn, from which we fear to shake a single dewdrop. . . . When I think of the dangers which you, so fair, so fragile, ran among the cruel rocks, in that old man's arms! . . . What he did was fine; he did the impossible. . . . But it was not enough. . . . How did you reach the shore at last? . . .

JOYZELLE.

I awoke lying on the sands. . . . The old man was there. Then he had me carried to this palace. . . .

LANCÉOR.

Is he king of this island? . . .

JOYZELLE.

The island is almost desert, one sees none but a few servants who move about in silence. . . . He can have for his subjects only the trees, the flowers and the happy birds with which the island seems filled. . . .

LANCÉOR.

What he did was well done. . . .

JOYZELLE.

He is good and kind; and he received me as my father himself could not have received me. . . . Yet I do not like him. . . .

LANCÉOR.

Why?

JOYZELLE.

I believe he loves me. . . .

LANCÉOR.

What! . . . He dares! . . . No, it is not possible, or else the years no longer have the weight they should have and reason escapes us when death draws near. . . .

JOYZELLE.

And yet I fear it. . . . He gave me to understand. . . . He is strange and sad. . . . They say he has a son who is very far from here, who is lost, perhaps. . . . He is always thinking of him. . . . When he thinks that he will see him again, his face lights up, he . . . Here he is! . . .

[*Enter* MERLIN.

MERLIN.

I was looking for you, Joyzelle. . . . (*Turning to Lancéor, with a threatening glance.*) As for you, I know who you are and I know the reasons that have brought you to this island, the trick of this pretended shipwreck and the name of the enemy who sent you. . . .

LANCÉOR.

Me? . . . But it was a mere accident that flung me on this coast. . . .

MERLIN.

Let us waste no phrases.

JOYZELLE.

What has he done?

MERLIN.

He intended, alas, to do the basest thing that man can do: to betray kindness, deceive friendship and sell to the enemy the too generous host who was going to welcome him. . . .

JOYZELLE.

No!

MERLIN.

Why? Do you know him?

JOYZELLE.

Yes.

MERLIN.

Since when?

JOYZELLE.

Since I first saw him.

MERLIN.

And when did you see him?

JOYZELLE.

When he entered this room. . . .

MERLIN.

That is hardly . . .

JOYZELLE.

It is enough.

MERLIN.

No, Joyzelle, and soon proofs and facts will show you that it is not enough and that an honest look, an innocent smile and ingenuous words often conceal more dangerous snares than those of thankless old age or of love that has but little hope. . . .

JOYZELLE.

What do you mean to do ?

MERLIN.

I am waiting for the final certainty ; and then I shall do what it is lawful and necessary to do to remove all fear of an enemy who would stop at nothing. The pitiless measures which I shall take concern your safety as much as my own ; for the same plots surround us both and we are united by fate. . . . I can tell you no more to-day ; have confidence in me ; perhaps you already know that your happiness is mine. . . .

JOYZELLE.

You saved my life, I remember that. . . .

MERLIN.

You remember it without any kindliness : but I hope that one day you will do me justice. . . . (*To* LANCÉOR.) As for you, go. The information which I have received is not open to doubt. When the facts which I fear have confirmed it, I shall act. Meanwhile, you are my prisoner. You will be shown the part of the palace reserved for you. If you go beyond the limits laid down, you become your own judge and

pronounce your own sentence. There will be no appeal. Go, my orders are given. . . .

LANCÉOR.

I obey, but only until you recognize your error. We shall meet soon, Joyzelle. . . .

MERLIN.

No, bid her farewell; for it is doubtful if you will ever see her again. . . . Nevertheless, Joyzelle, chance may bring you again in this man's presence. In that case, fly from him; your life and his depend most strictly on your prompt flight. If I learn that you have seen each other, you are irrevocably lost. . . . (*To* LANCÉOR.) Do you promise to fly from her?

LANCÉOR.

If her life is at stake, yes.

MERLIN.

And you, Joyzelle?

JOYZELLE.

No.

ACT II

A wild, neglected garden, full of weeds and brambles. On the right, a very high and gloomy wall, pierced by a railed gate.

[JOYZELLE *is discovered in the garden, alone.*

JOYZELLE.

This is the garden which no one visits. The sun does not enter here; the poor wild flowers upon which men wage war because they are not beautiful here await death; and the birds are silent. Here are the violet, which has lost its perfume, the trembling, shrinking buttercup and the scarlet poppy, which sheds its petals without ceasing. . . . Here are the scabious begging for a little water, the deadly spurge hiding its green blossoms, the blue campanula silently shaking its useless bells. . . . I know you all, you humble and despised flowers, so good and so ugly! . . . You could be beautiful; it needs scarce anything: a ray

of happiness, a minute's grace, a bolder smile to attract the bee. . . . But no eye sees you, no hand sows you, no hand gathers you; and I have come among you to be also alone. . . . How gloomy everything looks! . . . The grass is neglected and parched, the leaves are sick, the old trees dying; and spring itself and the dew of dawn are afraid lest they should grow sorrowful in this solitude. . . .

[LANCÉOR *appears behind the railed gate.*

LANCÉOR.

Joyzelle! . . .

JOYZELLE.

Lancéor! . . . .

LANCÉOR.

Joyzelle! . . .

JOYZELLE.

Go away! . . . Go away! . . . Take care! . . . It is death if he sees you! . . .

LANCÉOR.

He will not see us; he is very far from here.

JOYZELLE.

Where is he? . . .

LANCÉOR.

I saw him go away. I watched his departure from the top of that tower in which I am a prisoner. . . . He is at the other end of the island, near the blue forest that shuts in the horizon. . . .

JOYZELLE.

But he may return; or some one will tell him. . . . Go away, go away, I say! . . . Your life is at stake! . . .

LANCÉOR.

The palace is deserted; I have gone through the rooms, the gardens and the courts, the long box hedges, the marble staircases. . . .

JOYZELLE.

Go away, it is only a trap. . . . He has a design upon your life; I know it, he said so. . . . He suspects that I love you. . . . He is only seeking an excuse for what he

would like to do. . . . Go away! . . . As it is, you have done too much. . . .

LANCÉOR.

No.

JOYZELLE.

If you do not go away, then I shall go.

LANCÉOR.

If you go, Joyzelle, I shall remain at this gate until night brings him back to the palace. . . . He will find me on this forbidden threshold. . . . I have passed the limits assigned to me; I have therefore disobeyed him and I wish him to see it and I wish him to know it! . . .

JOYZELLE.

Lancéor, have pity! I entreat you, Lancéor! . . . You are risking all our happiness! . . . Do not think only of yourself! . . . I will go where you please, if you will leave this gate! . . . We shall see each other elsewhere, later, another day. . . . We must choose the time, we must take care, we must make our preparations. . . . See, I am stretching out my arms

to you . . . what would you have me do? . . . What must I promise you? . . .

LANCÉOR.

Open the gate.

JOYZELLE.

No, no, no, I cannot. . . .

LANCÉOR.

Open, open, Joyzelle, if you would have me live. . . .

JOYZELLE.

Why do you wish me to open? . . .

LANCÉOR.

I want to see you closer, I want to touch your hands which I have not yet touched, to look at you once more as I looked at you on the first day. . . . Open, or I am determined to be undone; I shall not go away. . . .

JOYZELLE.

Will you go away then? . . .

LANCÉOR.

I promise you, Joyzelle. . . . As soon as you open the gate, before a swallow, before a thought has time to hasten from wherever it may be to surprise my hand as it touches yours. . . . I beseech you, Joyzelle: this is too cruel. . . . I am standing at this gate like a blind beggar. . . . I can see only your shadow moving among the leaves. . . . These bars are hateful and hide your face. . . . One look alone, Joyzelle, in which I shall see you wholly; and then I will go like a robber flying with a great treasure dragging noisily behind him. . . . No one will know and we shall be happy. . . .

JOYZELLE.

Lancéor, this is terrible! . . . I never tremble, but I am trembling to-day. . . . Perhaps it means your life; and it already means mine. . . . What is that light which rises so quickly? . . . It has come to threaten us, it is going to betray us! . . .

LANCÉOR.

No, no, it is the sun rising behind the wall. . . . It is the innocent sun, the good May sun, which has come to delight us. . . . Open, then, open quickly: each minute that passes adds its dangers to the dangers which you fear. . . . A single movement, Joyzelle; a turn of your hand; and you really open the gates of life to me! (JOYZELLE *turns the key; the gate opens;* LANCÉOR *crosses the threshold.*)

LANCÉOR.

(*Taking* JOYZELLE *in his arms.*) Joyzelle! . . .

JOYZELLE.

I am here! . . .

LANCÉOR.

I hold your hands and your eyes, your hair and your lips, in the same kiss and at the same moment, all the gifts of love which I have never had and all its presence! . . . My arms are so surprised that they cannot carry them; and my whole life cannot contain them. . . . Do not

turn away your face, do not draw back your lips! . . .

JOYZELLE.

It is not to escape you, but to be closer to you. . . .

LANCÉOR.

Do not turn your head; do not deprive me of a shadow of your lashes, a gleam of your eyes: it is not the hours, but the very minutes that threaten our happiness. . . .

JOYZELLE.

I was seeking your smile. . . .

LANCÉOR.

And your own meets mine in the first kiss that passes between our lips to unite our destinies. . . . It seems to me to-day as though I had always seen you and always clasped you and as though I were repeating, in reality, on the threshold of paradise, what I did on earth when embracing your shadow. . . .

JOYZELLE.

I used to embrace you at night when I embraced my dreams. . . .

LANCÉOR.

I knew no doubt. . . .

JOYZELLE.

I knew no fear. . . .

LANCÉOR.

And everything is granted me. . . .

JOYZELLE.

And everything makes me happy ! . . .

LANCÉOR.

How deep your eyes are and how full of confidence ! . . .

JOYZELLE.

And how clear are yours and full of certainty ! . . .

LANCÉOR.

How well I recognize them ! . . .

JOYZELLE.

And how well I know yours ! . . .

LANCÉOR.

Your hands rest on my shoulders just as when I lay waiting for them without daring to wake. . . .

JOYZELLE.

And your arm is round my neck just as it was. . . .

LANCÉOR.

It was thus that your eyelids used to close at the breath of love. . . .

JOYZELLE.

And it was thus, too, that the tears came to your eyes when they opened. . . .

LANCÉOR.

When happiness is so great. . . .

JOYZELLE.

Unhappiness does not come so long as love binds it. . . .

LANCÉOR.

Do you love me? . . .

JOYZELLE.

Yes. . . .

LANCÉOR.

Oh, how you said "yes!" . . . "Yes" from the depths of your heart, from the depths of your thought, from the depths of your very soul! . . . I knew it, perhaps; but it had to be said; and our kisses themselves did not count without it. . . . Now it is enough, it will feed my life; all the hatred on earth could not wipe it away nor thirty years of distress exhaust it! . . . I am in the light and the spring overwhelms me! . . . I look up to the sky and the garden awakens! . . . Do you hear the birds making the trees sing and repeating your smile and that wonderful "yes;" and do you see the rays that caress your hair like diamonds sparkling among the flames and the thousands of flowers that bend over us to surprise in our eyes the mystery of a love which they did not know? . . .

JOYZELLE.

(*Opening her eyes.*) There was nothing here but poor, dead flowers. . . .

[*She looks around her, stupefied; for, since Lancéor's entrance, without their noticing it, the gloomy garden has become gradually transfigured by magic. The wild plants, the weeds that poisoned it have grown and each, according to its kind, has increased its flowers, blooming to a prodigious size. The puny bindweed has become a powerful creeper, whose wonderful blossoms engarland the trees weighed down with ripe fruits and peopled with miraculous birds. The pale pimpernel is now a tall shrub of a warm and tender green, with bursting flowers larger than lilies. The pale scabious has lengthened its stalks, from which spring tufts like mauve heliotrope. . . . Butterflies flit to and fro, the bees hum, the birds sing, the fruits swing and fall, the light streams down. The perspective of the garden has become infinitely extended; and the audience now sees, to the right, a marble basin, half-hidden behind a hedge of oleanders and turnsoles cut into arches.*

LANCÉOR.

There is nothing here now but the flowers of life! . . . Look! . . . They are coming down, they are streaming down upon us! . . . They are bursting on the branches, they bend the trees, they entangle our steps, they press against one another, they crush one another, they open out wide, one within the other, they blind the leaves, they dazzle the grass; I know none of them and the spring is drunk; I have never seen flowers so disordered, so resplendent! . . .

JOYZELLE.

Where are we? . . .

LANCÉOR.

We are in the garden which you would not open to my love. . . .

JOYZELLE.

What have we done?

LANCÉOR.

I have given the kiss that is given but once; and you have spoken the word that is never respoken. . . .

JOYZELLE.

(*Swooning.*) Lancéor, I am mad, or else we are going to die. . . .

LANCÉOR.

(*Supporting her.*) Joyzelle, you are turning pale and your dear arms are pressing me as though you feared that a hidden enemy . . .

JOYZELLE.

Have you not seen . . . ?

LANCÉOR.

What ?

JOYZELLE.

We are caught in a trap and those flowers are betraying us. . . . The birds were silent, the trees were dead, there was nothing here but weeds, which no one dug up. . . . I recognize them all and remember their names, which still remind me of their former wretchedness. . . . Here is the buttercup, laden with golden disks; the poor pale pimpernel is changed into a bush of lilies; the tall scabious are dropping their petals over our heads; and those purple bells

which shoot up over the wall to tell the world that they have seen us, are the foxglove, which was pining in the shade. . . . It is as though the sky had shed its flowers. . . . Do not look at them; they are here to ruin us. . . . Ah, I am wrong to seek and I should have understood! . . . He muttered confused threats. . . . Yes, yes, I knew he had spells at his command. . . . They told me so one day, but I did not believe them. . . . Now it is his time; it is well, it is too late; but perhaps we shall see that love also knows. . . .

[*A horn sounds.*

LANCÉOR.

Hark! . . .

JOYZELLE.

It is the horses' hoofs and the horn sounding the recall. . . . He is returning. Fly! . . .

LANCÉOR.

But you? . . .

JOYZELLE.

I have nothing to fear, but his hateful love. . . . Go! . . .

LANCÉOR.

I will stay with you; and, if his violence . . .

JOYZELLE.

You will ruin us both. . . . Go! . . . Hide there, behind those spurges. . . . Whatever he may say, whatever he may do, do not show yourself and fear nothing for me: I shall know how to defend myself. . . . Go! . . . He is coming! . . . Go! . . . I hear his voice. . . .

[LANCÉOR *hides behind a cluster of tall spurges. The railed gate opens and* MERLIN *enters the garden.*

MERLIN.

Is he here, Joyzelle? . . .

JOYZELLE.

No.

MERLIN.

Those flowers do not lie; they inform against love. . . . They were your keepers and have been faithful to me. . . . I am not cruel and I forgive more than once. . . . You can save him

by pointing to the bush which hides him. . . . (JOYZELLE *stands motionless.*) Do not look at me with those eyes of hatred. . . . You will love me one day, for love goes by dark and generous paths. . . . Do you not believe that I will keep my promises? . . .

JOYZELLE.

No! . . .

MERLIN.

I have done nothing, Joyzelle, to deserve such hatred or such an insult. . . . Since you wish it, I will let fate take its course. . . .

[*A cry of pain is heard from behind the cluster of spurges.*

JOYZELLE.

(*Rushing behind the cluster.*) Lancéor! . . .

LANCÉOR.

Joyzelle! . . . I am hurt. . . . An adder has stung me. . . .

JOYZELLE.

It is not an adder. . . . It is a horrible animal. . . . It is lifting itself against you! . . . Let me

crush it underfoot. . . . It is foaming. . . . It is dead. . . . Lancéor, you are turning pale! . . . Lean on my neck. . . . Fear nothing, I am strong. . . . Show me your wound. . . . Lancéor, I am here. . . . Lancéor, answer me! . . .

MERLIN.

(*Approaching them and examining the bite.*) The wound is mortal. . . . The poison is very slow and its action is strange. . . . Do not despair. . . . I alone know the remedy. . . .

JOYZELLE.

Lancéor! Lancéor! Answer me! Answer me! . . .

MERLIN.

He will not answer, he is sound asleep. . . . Withdraw, Joyzelle, unless you wish this mere sleep to end in the grave. . . . Withdraw, Joyzelle: you will not be betraying him; you will be warding off death. . . .

JOYZELLE.

First make the sign that shall restore him to life!

MERLIN.

(*Looking at her gravely.*) I will make the sign, Joyzelle. (JOYZELLE *exit slowly, turns back and withdraws at last, before a grave and imperious gesture from* MERLIN. MERLIN, *left alone with* LANCÉOR, *kneels down beside him to dress his wound.*) There, have no fear, my son, there, it is for your happiness; and may all my heart open in the first kiss that I am able to give you.

[*He embraces him long and fervently. Enter* ARIELLE.

ARIELLE.

Master, we must hasten and lay the new trap.

MERLIN.

Will he fall into it?

ARIELLE.

Man always falls into a trap, when his instinct leads him; but let us veil his reason, let us change his character; we shall behold a sight that will make us smile. . . .

MERLIN.

I shall not smile, for the sight is a sad one and I do not like to see a noble and beautiful love, a love that believes itself predestined and unparalleled, thus reduced to nothing, at the first proof, in the arms of a phantom. . . .

ARIELLE.

Lancéor is not free, for he is no longer himself and I have abandoned him to his instinct during the past hour. . . .

MERLIN.

He ought to have conquered it. . . .

ARIELLE.

You speak like that because I am submissive: but remember the time when I was less docile.

MERLIN.

You think yourself very docile because I have conquered you; but you retain some shadow even in the light in which I have been able to train you and I find in you

a certain cruelty that takes too great a pleasure in men's weaknesses. . . .

ARIELLE.

Men's weaknesses are often necessary to the purposes of life. . . .

MERLIN.

What will happen if he yields? . . .

ARIELLE.

He will yield: it is written. The question is if Joyzelle's love will surmount the proof.

MERLIN.

And do you not know?

ARIELLE.

No; she has a mind which is not wholly within my sphere, which depends upon a principle which I do not know, which I have never seen except in her and which changes the future. . . . I have tried to subdue her; but she obeys me only in little things. But

it is time to act. Go and find Joyzelle and leave your son to me. . . . Go, lest you should spoil the proof. . . . I shall revive him, I shall renew and make still deeper and blinder the intoxication into which I have plunged him; and I shall become visible to his eyes in order to deceive his kisses. . . .

MERLIN.

(*In a voice of smiling reproach.*) Arielle . . .

ARIELLE.

Go, let me be. . . . You know that kisses given to poor Arielle pass like the flash of a wing that closes over running water. . . .

[MERLIN *retires to a distance.* ARIELLE *goes towards the marble basin; and there, half-hidden behind the hedge of oleanders, she half opens the veils that cover her, sits on the grassy steps that surround the basin and slowly unties her long hair, while* LANCÉOR *awakes, groping with his hands.*

LANCÉOR.

Where did I fall asleep? Some strange poison has entered my heart. . . . I am no longer the same and my mind is wandering. . . . I am struggling against the intoxication and I do not know where I am going. . . . (*Catches sight of* ARIELLE.) But who is that woman behind the oleanders? (*Approaching the hedge and looking.*) She is beautiful! . . . She is half unclad and her curved foot, like a prudent flower, is trying the water, which smiles and encircles it with pearls. . . . She raises her arms to bind her hair; and the light of the sky glides between her shoulders, like gleaming water over marble wings. (*Approaching closer.*) She is beautiful, she is beautiful! . . , I must see her. . . . She is turning round and one of her bare breasts, peeping through her tresses, adds rays to the rays that strike it. . . . She is listening, she hears; and her wide-open eyes are questioning the roses. . . . She has seen me, she hides herself, she is going to fly. . . . (*Passing*

through the hedge.) No, no, do not fly from me! . . . I have seen you. . . . It is too late! . . . (*Taking* ARIELLE *in his arms.*) I want to know the name of so pure a vision, which plunges into darkness all that I have loved! . . . I want to know also what too faithful shadow, what profound retreat concealed the marvel which I hold in my arms! . . . What trees, what caves, what towers, what walls were able to stifle the brilliancy of that flesh, the fragrance of that life, the fire of those eyes? . . . Where were you hiding, you whom even a blind man would find without difficulty in a holiday crowd? . . . No, do not thrust me away; this is not the passion, the intoxication of a moment; it is the lasting dizziness of love! . . . I am at your knees; I humbly embrace them. . . . I give myself to you alone. . . . I am only yours. . . . I ask for nothing but a kiss from your lips to forget the rest and seal the future. . . . Bow down your head. . . . I see it bending towards me, I see it consenting; and I call for the token which nothing can efface henceforth. . . . (*He kisses her passionately. A cry of distress is*

heard from behind the bushes.) What is it? . . .

[ARIELLE *releases herself from his embrace, flies and disappears. Enter* JOYZELLE.

JOYZELLE.

(*Dismayed.*) Lancéor! . . .

LANCÉOR.

Why, where do you come from, Joyzelle?

JOYZELLE.

I have seen and heard. . . .

LANCÉOR.

Well, what? . . . What have you seen? . . . Look around you: there is nothing to see. . . . The oleanders are in flower, the water in the basin sleeps, the doves are cooing, the water-lilies are opening their petals: that is all that I see, all that you can see. . . .

JOYZELLE.

Do you love her?

LANCÉOR.

Whom ? . . .

JOYZELLE.

The woman who has just fled. . . .

LANCÉOR.

How should I love her ? . . . I had never seen her. . . . The woman was there ; I happened to pass. . . . She gave a loud scream. . . . I ran up. . . . She seemed to have lost her footing and, as I held out my hand to her, she gave me the kiss which you heard. . . .

JOYZELLE.

Is it really you speaking ?

LANCÉOR.

Yes, look at me : it is really and wholly I. . . . Come nearer, touch me if you doubt it. . . .

JOYZELLE.

The proof was terrible ; but this is mortal. . . .

LANCÉOR.

What? . . .

JOYZELLE.

Was this the first time that you saw that woman? . . .

LANCÉOR.

Yes.

JOYZELLE.

I shall not speak of it again. . . . I shall understand, perhaps; in any case, I forgive. . . .

LANCÉOR.

There is nothing to forgive.

JOYZELLE.

What do you say? . . .

LANCÉOR.

I say that I have no need for the pardon with which you overwhelm a fault which I have not committed.

JOYZELLE.

Which you have not committed? . . . Then I did not see what I saw nor hear what I heard? . . .

LANCÉOR.

No.

JOYZELLE.

Lancéor! . . .

LANCÉOR.

Lancéor! Lancéor! . . . If you called me by my name for a thousand years and more, it would alter nothing in what was nothing! . . .

JOYZELLE.

I do not know what is passing between your happiness and mine. . . . Oh, look at me and touch my hands, that I may know where you are! . . . Oh, if you speak like that, then it was not you whom I saw this morning in the wonderful garden where I gave away my soul! . . . No, there is something that is mocking our strength. . . . It is not possible that all is thus lost because of a single word. . . . I am seeking, I am all astray. . . . I

saw you, then, and saw all truth and all trust, as one suddenly sees the sea between the trees! . . . I was sure, I knew. . . . Love did not deceive me. . . . It deceives me now! . . . It cannot be that all this should crumble away for a yea or a nay. . . . No, no, I will not have it! . . . Come, it is not too late; we have not yet lost our happiness. . . . It is all in our hands, which close upon it. . . . What you have just done was mad, perhaps. . . . I forget it, I laugh at it, I saw nothing, I tell you! . . . It does not exist: you can wipe it out with a word. . . . You well know, as I do, that love has words which nothing can resist and that the greatest fault, when confessed in a loyal kiss, becomes a truth more beautiful than innocence. . . . Speak that word to me; give me that kiss; confess the truth, confess what I saw, what I heard; and all will again become pure as it was and I shall recover all that you gave me. . . .

LANCÉOR.

I have said what I have said; if you do not believe me, go away, you annoy me. . . .

JOYZELLE.

Look me in the face. . . . Do you love her, since you lie like that? . . .

LANCÉOR.

No, I love no one and you less than the others. . . .

JOYZELLE.

Lancéor! . . . What have I done? . . Perhaps, without knowing. . . .

LANCÉOR.

Nothing, it is not that. . . . But I am not what you thought and I do not care to be. . . . I am like other men; I wish you to know it and make the best of it. . . . I want all our promises to be scattered to the wind of some new dream, like this dead leaf which I crumple in my hand. . . . Ah, the love of women! . . . Well, so much the worse for them! . . . I shall live like other men in a faithless world, where no one loves, where all oaths yield to the first test. . . . Ah, tears! . . . They were bound to come, I expected

them! . . . You are hard, I know, and your tears are scarce. . . . I count them drop by drop! . . . You did not love me! . . . Love which comes thus, at the first call, is not that on which happiness is based. . . . In any case, it is not that which I hoped for. . . . More tears! . . . They flow too late! . . . You did not love me, I did not love you. . . . Another would have said. . . . Ah, another would have known! . . . But you, no, no; go away! . . . Go away, go away, I say! . . .

[JOYZELLE *moves away silently, sobbing. When she has taken a few steps, she turns back, hesitates, looks sadly at* LANCÉOR *and disappears with a suppressed cry,* "I love you! . . ." LANCÉOR, *overwhelmed, bewildered, staggers away and leans against the trunk of a tree.*

LANCÉOR.

What have I done? . . . I am obeying . . . what? . . . I do not know. . . . What have I said? . . . It is not I speaking. . . . I have

lost happiness, the present, the future. . . . I am no longer my own master. . . . I do what I hate to do . . . I do not know who I am. . . . Joyzelle! . . . Ah, my Joyzelle! . . .

[*He falls, sobbing, with his face to the ground.*

ACT III

SCENE I.—*A Room in the Palace*

[LANCÉOR *is discovered before a mirror. He appears emaciated, bent, aged, unrecognizable.*

LANCÉOR.

Who am I? In a few hours I have aged thirty years. . . . The poison is doing its work and sorrow too. . . . I see myself with terror in this mirror which shows me the wreck of myself. . . . Yet, it does not lie. (*Going to another mirror.*) For here is another that says the same thing. . . . unless they all lie, even as everything seems to lie and to mock at me in this extraordinary island. (*He feels his face.*) Alas, they are right! . . . These wrinkles which my hand follows are not formed by their malevolent crystal. . . . They are in my flesh! . . .

And these hideous blemishes which will not come away, I feel them under my fingers. . . . These bent shoulders refuse to straighten themselves; my hair is colourless, like pale ashes after the flame has died away; my eyes, even my eyes, hardly recognize themselves. . . . They used to open, to laugh, to welcome life. . . . Now they blink and their glances avoid me like the glances of a knave. . . . Not a thing remains to me of what I was; my mother would pass by me and not see me. . . . It is finished. . . . (*Drawing the curtain of a tall window.*) Let us hide ourselves; let complete dusk cover up all this! . . . (*He lies down in a dark corner of the room.*) I give up, I consent. . . . I have done what love can never forgive. . . . I am losing my life at last, as I have lost Joyzelle. . . . She will not see me again, I shall not see her again . . .

[*A door opens. Enter* JOYZELLE.

JOYZELLE.

(*Surprised by the darkness, she stands a moment on the threshold. Then, casting her*

eyes around the room, she perceives LANCÉOR *lying in a corner and rushes towards him with outstretched arms.*) Lancéor! . . . Ah, these last three days I have lived like a mad thing! I looked for you everywhere. I went to the tower. . . . The doors were closed, the windows too. I crouched on the sill to catch a glimpse of your shadow, I called, I screamed, no one answered. . . . But how pale you are, how thin! . . . I am talking to you without thinking. . . . Give me your two hands. . . .

LANCÉOR.

You know me? . . .

JOYZELLE.

Why not?

LANCÉOR.

But then I am not . . .? I am still myself? . . . Look at me! . . . What trace of me remains? . . . (*Going to the window and tearing aside the curtain.*) Look! Look! . . . What do you know me by? . . . Tell

me, is it here? . . . Is it my hands, my eyes, my clothes, perhaps? . . .

JOYZELLE

(*Looking at him and throwing herself, weeping, in his arms.*) Oh, how you have suffered! . . .

LANCÉOR.

I have suffered, yes, I have suffered! . . . I deserved it but too well, after what I said, after what I did! . . . But that is not what matters or overwhelms me. . . . I would willingly die, if you could but see once more, were it only for the flash of an eye, that which you once loved. . . . I cling to myself, to the little that remains of me. . . . I should like to hide myself, to bury my distress; and yet I want you to see me first, so that you may know at last what you would have to love, if you still loved me. . . . Come, come, nearer, nearer. . . . Not nearer to me, but nearer to the rays that shine upon my wretchedness. . . . Look at these wrinkles, these dead eyes, these lips.

. . . No, no, do not approach, lest disgust . . . I am less like myself than if I had returned from a world which life had never visited. . . . You do not recoil? You are not astonished? . . . You do not see me as these mirrors see me? . . .

JOYZELLE.

I see that you are pale and that you seem tired. . . . Do not put away my arms. . . . Bring your face closer. . . . Why not let me put my lips to it, as I did when all things smiled to us in the garden of flowers? . . . Love knows many days on which nothing smiles. . . . What matter, if it be there to smile when we weep? . . . I am pushing back your hair which hid your face and made it look so sad. . . . See, it is just like that which I pushed back in our first kiss. . . . Come, come, do not think about the lies of the mirrors. . . . They do not know what they say; but love knows. . . . Already life is returning to those eyes which see me again. . . . Have no fear, for I have none. . . . I know what we must do and I shall have the secret that will cure your pain. . . .

LANCÉOR.

Joyzelle! . . .

JOYZELLE.

Yes, yes, come nearer; I love you more dearly than at the happy moment when all united us. . . .

LANCÉOR.

Ah, I understand that; but the other, the other thing! . . .

JOYZELLE.

What thing?

LANCÉOR.

I understand that one can find one's love in ruins, that one can gather up its remnants and love them still. . . . But where are the remnants of our love? Nothing is left of it; for, before fate struck me as you see, I had crushed out of existence all that it could not destroy. . . . I have lied and deceived; and, at the very moment when the least lie begins again in a sphere where nothing is wiped out, a fault which love might have pardoned. . . . Truth

is dead in our one heart. . . . I have lost the confidence in which all my thoughts surrounded your thoughts, even as a transparent water surrounds a still clearer water. . . . I myself no longer believe in it, I no longer believe in myself; I have nothing pure left into which you can bend to find my shadow; and my soul is even sadder than my body. . . .

JOYZELLE.

Did you kiss that woman? . . .

LANCÉOR.

Yes.

JOYZELLE.

Did she call you? . . .

LANCÉOR.

No.

JOYZELLE.

And why did you say that I was mistaken? . . .

LANCÉOR.

What good would it be to tell you, Joyzelle? It is too late. . . . You would not believe me,

for you would have to believe the incredible. . . . I was walking in a trance, in a sort of invincible, mocking dream. . . . My mind, my reason, my will were all farther from themselves than is this shattered body from what it was. . . . I would have liked to tell you, to shout to you again and again that I was a lie that had escaped control and that the shameful speeches that defiled my lips stifled, in spite of myself, the tearful confession and the ardent words of desperate love that were leaping towards you. . . . I made efforts fit to burst my throat, to break my heart; and I heard my faithless voice betray me and my arms, my hands, my eyes, my kisses were powerless to disown it; for, except my soul, which you did not see, I felt myself a prey to a hostile force, irresistible, alas, and incomprehensible! . . .

JOYZELLE.

But ah, I did see it! . . . And I knew at once that it was not you that were lying, that it was impossible. . . .

LANCÉOR.

How did you know? . . .

JOYZELLE.

Because I love you. . . .

LANCÉOR.

But what am I, Joyzelle, what do you love in me, in whom I have profaned and others destroyed all that you once loved? . . .

JOYZELLE.

You.

LANCÉOR.

What remains of me? . . . Not these hands, which have lost their strength; not these eyes, which no longer have their brightness; not this heart, which has betrayed love. . . .

JOYZELLE.

It is you and still you and none but you yourself! . . . What matter who you are, so long as

I find you! . . . Oh, I cannot tell how to explain that! . . . When one loves as I love you, she is blind and deaf, because she looks beyond and listens elsewhere. . . . When she loves as I love you, it is not what he says, it is not what he does, it is not what he is that she loves in the man she loves: it is he and only he, who remains the same, through the passing years and troubles. . . . It is he alone, it is you alone, in whom no change can come but that which increases love. . . . He who is all in you, you who are all in him, you whom I see, whom I hear, to whom I listen incessantly and whom I love always. . . .

LANCÉOR.

Joyzelle! . . .

JOYZELLE.

Yes, yes, embrace me, crush me in your arms! . . . We have to struggle, we shall have to suffer; we are here in a world that seems full of snares. . . . We are only two, but we are all love! . . .

SCENE II.—*A grove.*

[JOYZELLE *lies sleeping on a grassy bank, before a box hedge, cut into arches, in which lilies are flowering. It is night. A fountain ripples gently. The moon is shining. Enter* ARIELLE.

ARIELLE.

She sleeps. . . . The breaths of the garden are hushed around her to listen to her breath; and the nightingale alone, deputed by the night which bathes her in silver, comes to soothe her slumbers. . . . How beautiful and peaceful she is; and how pure she looks, a thousand times purer than the water that trickles yonder, flowing from the glaciers, in the snowy whiteness that sings under the pale leaves! . . . Her sweet hair lies spread like a flood of motionless light; and the moon cannot tell to whom belongs the gold that mingles with the azure in which its beams float. . . . Her bright eyes are closed; and yet the light that falls from the stars tremulously raises her loving eyelids to seek

beneath them the last memory of the fair day that is past. . . . Her mouth is a moist, breathing flower; and the lilies have poured dewdrops on her bare shoulder, to give her her share of the pearls which night distributes in silence, in the name of the heavens that open over the treasure of the worlds. . . . Ah, Joyzelle, Joyzelle! I am but a phantom lost in the night, more lost than you, for all my clear-sightedness, and nearer the tomb where happiness expires. . . . I am not my own mistress; I obey my master, I can give nothing but an invisible kiss, which cannot wake you and is not even mine. . . . But I love you, I love you, as a less happy sister loves her whom love has chosen first. . . . I love you, I encompass you with all the powers that are not named in the prayers of men; and I would that my master had met you earlier, before fate, which hurries forward that incomparable hour, had fixed the tearful future that awaits him and awaits me with him. . . . I spread my powerless, troubled affection over your calm sleep. . . . Here is the only kiss that I can give you. . . . Ah, why does not he of whom I am but the unconscious

and docile shadow come himself to lay it on your lips, which call to mine even as all that is beautiful calls to mystery! . . .

[*She kisses* JOYZELLE *on the forehead.*

JOYZELLE.

(*In her sleep.*) Lancéor! . . .

ARIELLE.

One more. . . . The last, even as we drink of the well defended by the angels who keep the secrets of time and space, the well at whose brink we shall never rest again. . . .

JOYZELLE.

(*Sleeping, talking as in a dream.*) Is that you, Lancéor? . . . How sweet your lips are at the breath of dawn! . . . I swoon beneath the flowers that fall from paradise. . . .

ARIELLE.

Faithful in sleep and constant in her dreams! . . . The demons of the night will steal nothing

from the love that fills the past and future of a heart! . . . Ah, my master and father! . . . It is she whom your only hope awaited, in vain, to avert the fate that threatens your old age! . . . O master, if you be willing, there is yet time; and happiness is here: you have but to gather it! . . . It sways uncertain between your son and you; a gesture would be enough to fix it upon ourselves. . . . Come hither, she is yours! . . . Come, come, come, I am calling you. . . . I know that I am right and that man must not renounce life and ruin himself to save those whom he loves. . . .

MERLIN.

(*In the distance, in a voice of grave reproach.*) Arielle! . . .

[*He enters, wrapped in a long cloak.*

ARIELLE.

I am speaking for you and my voice is your voice. . . . I speak in the name of your heart, which loves deeply and dares not confess it. . . . You had, at this prescribed moment, to meet

that sleeping woman, in order to avoid one who will destroy your old age. . . .

MERLIN.

Begone, it is too late. . . .

ARIELLE.

No, it is not too late; this is the one moment; and your destiny depends on the movement which you make. . . .

MERLIN.

Begone, do not tempt me, or I will plunge you back into your impotent shade. . . . I drew you from it to open my eyes, not to mislead me. . . .

ARIELLE.

To listen to the instinct by which alone men are saved is not to be misled. . . . Think of the terrible days which Viviane is preparing: Viviane, whom you must love if you do not love this one. . . .

MERLIN.

Viviane? . . . Is it in this life or in some other world that that name resounds within my secret heart like a name of madness, sorrow and shame? . . .

ARIELLE.

No, it is in this life, the only one that you possess. . . . It is the name of the fairy who, in Brocéliande, where your fate leads you, awaits your appearance to shatter your old age. . . . O master, I see her! . . . Have a care, she approaches and will win your heart! . . . So soon as this love, so pure, so healthful, has lost its claims, hers crawls out of the shadow. . . . Master, I entreat you! . . . My eyes are counting her wiles: she entwines you with her arms which travesty love; she takes away your power, your reason, your wisdom; she snatches from you at last the secret of your strength; and, like an old, drunken man, you fall to the ground. . . . Then she strips you, mocks at you, rises to her feet and closes on us the door of the mortal cavern which will never open again. . . .

MERLIN.

It is inevitable, then? . . .

ARIELLE.

You know, as I do, that nothing can deceive me where you are concerned. . . . Master, I beseech you, both for yourself and for me, who love the light and who must lose it with you! . . . This is the irrevocable hour! . . . Choose, choose life! . . . It still offers itself and therefore it belongs to us and you have a right to it! . . .

MERLIN.

Begone, it is useless. . . . Besides, this one would never have loved me. . . .

ARIELLE.

It is enough that you love her and that he whom she loves no longer stands between you. . . . That is what I read in the two futures. . . .

MERLIN.

(*Wiping the sweat of anguish from his brow.*) Begone, for I know. . . . And so it was written that, by loving this child, I could have saved myself. . . . But she is not for me; and my hour is past. . . . This is the hour of those who come and who have met as time ordained, as life ordained. . . . Begone, begone, I say! . . . (ARIELLE, *veiling her features, exit silently.*) I surrender my share; and it is for you, my son, that I complete the proof. . . . (*He takes off his cloak and appears taller and younger, dressed in clothes similar to* LANCÉOR'S *and presenting a strange resemblance to him. Approaching* JOYZELLE.) Ah, my innocent Joyzelle! . . . You will suffer too, you must suffer still more, since destiny lies hidden in your tears; but what matter the sorrows that lead to love? . . . I would gladly exchange all the joys that I have known in my poor life for the most cruel of those happy sorrows. . . . (*He leans over* JOYZELLE.)

Arielle spoke truly. I have but to make a movement to put back the hours and the days and thus escape the horrible end which fate reserves for me. . . . Yes, but that movement destroys him whom I love more than myself, him whom the years have chosen for the love for which I had hoped. . . . Ah, when we thus hold in our hands our own happiness and that of another man; when we must crush one so that the other may survive: it is then that we feel how deep are the roots that bind us to the earth on which we suffer; it is then that life utters a superhuman cry to make itself heard and to defend its rights! . . . But it is then also that we must give ear to the other voice that speaks, to the voice that has nothing definite or sure to tell us, that has nothing to promise and that is only a murmur more sacred than life's inarticulate cries. . . . Lancéor and Joyzelle, love each other, love me, for I have loved you. . . . I am feeble and frail and made for happiness like other men; nor do I surrender my share without a struggle. . . . Love each other, my children; I am listening to the little voice

which has nothing to tell me, but which alone is right. . . .

[*He kneels before* JOYZELLE *and kisses her on the forehead.*

JOYZELLE.

(*Waking with a start.*) Lancéor! . . .

MERLIN.

Yes, it is I: the darkness has led me to you; and I come to wake you with a new kiss, so that you may . . .

JOYZELLE.

(*Springing up and looking at him in terror.*) Who are you? . . .

MERLIN.

(*Putting out his arms to embrace her.*) You know who I am, Joyzelle, and love must tell you. . . .

JOYZELLE.

(*Drawing back violently.*) Ah, do not touch me, or I shall summon death to come to put an end to this horrible dream! . . .

I know not what phantoms have haunted this night, but this is the vilest, the basest, the most cowardly that the darkness has sent! . . . I do not believe in it yet! . . . I am bruising my eyes in trying to awake myself! . . . Ah, do not come near me! . . . Back! . . . Begone! . . . You fill me with horror! . . .

MERLIN.

Look at me, Joyzelle! . . . I do not understand you; and doubtless sleep still troubles. . . .

JOYZELLE.

Where is he? . . .

MERLIN.

Wake, Joyzelle. . . .

JOYZELLE.

Where is he and what have you done with him? . . .

MERLIN.

He is wherever I am; and, if your eyes mislead you . . .

JOYZELLE.

Do you not know that I carry him here, in these eyes which see you and compare what he is with what you are? . . . Have you not seen what he is in my heart, that you should copy him thus? . . . You, beside him; you, in his clothes and under his aspect: ah, it is as though death pretended to be life! . . . But there might be twenty thousand of you resembling him and he alone be changed from what he was yesterday; and I would sweep away the twenty thousand phantoms, to go to the only man who is not a dream among the other dreams! . . . Oh, do not try to hide in the shadow. . . . You retreat too late; I have discovered you and I know who you are. . . I know your spells; and how I should laugh at them, did I not fear that, by your witchcraft, when usurping that dear and unrecognizable shape, you have caused him to suffer! . . . What have you done to him? . . . Where is he? . . . I will know. . . . You shall not go without answering . . . (*Seizing* MERLIN'S *hand.*) I am alone, I am

weak. . . . But I insist, I insist. . . . I will know, I will know! . . .

MERLIN.

I love you too much, Joyzelle, to do him any harm, so long as you love him. . . . He has therefore nothing to fear. . . . Do you not fear me either. I am not here to take advantage of the darkness and surprise your heart. I had another object. . . . Listen to me, Joyzelle; it is no longer the rival or the unhappy lover that speaks to you; it is a prudent and anxious father. . . . Before he came who conquered you, as never man in this world conquered woman, I had, I confess, caught a glimpse of a happiness which it is idle to pursue in the decline of years. . . . To-day I retire, sadly, but in good faith. . . . I know how much you love the poor unconscious being whom malevolent chance has placed upon your road. . . . And do not mistake me: I am speaking of him now without hatred or envy, but not without dismay, when I think of the heart-rending days

which he is preparing for you. . . . That is why I insist on enlightening you as regards him, at the risk of displeasing you. . . . I have no other care than to make you turn away from an unhappy love in which nothing but tears and disillusion awaits you. . . . I have no hope for myself. . . . I do not ask you to love me in his stead. . . . You have shown me fully that that is impossible. . . . I desire only that you will cease to love him: that is all that I implore of the kindness of fate; and fate to-night hears my prayer. . . .

JOYZELLE.

How? . . .

MERLIN.

The proof is grave and sad; I would have liked to spare you. . . . But you know better than I that there are salutary sufferings, before which it is shameful to fly. . . . A sign will be enough to overturn a world. . . . A little movement of that neck which as yet bends without anxiety, a single glance of those

eyes, too confident and too full of innocence, will destroy before my sight the most beautiful thing that love has created in a woman's heart. . . . And yet, it must be. . . . It is right, it is well that this thing should to-day be lost in tears which it may yet be possible to wipe away; for later it would have had to sink in sorrows which nothing could have consoled. . . .

JOYZELLE.

What do you mean? . . .

MERLIN.

That, at this very moment, when all that is spotless and true, limpid and ardent in your heart, when all the transparent virtues of your soul, all the faithfulness, all the loyalty and all the innocence of your virgin blood mount up towards him whom you had selected to make of him the purest, the happiest of men, he is there, behind us, at two steps from this bank, sheltered by those leaves which he thinks impenetrable, in the arms of the woman with whom, the other day, as you yourself saw, he

profaned the marvellous love which you have given him ! . . .

JOYZELLE.

No.

MERLIN.

Why do you say no, without looking? . . .

JOYZELLE.

Because he is myself. . . .

MERLIN.

I do not ask you to believe my words: I simply ask you to turn your head. . . .

JOYZELLE.

No.

MERLIN.

Do you hear the murmur of their voices mingling and the song of kisses answering kisses ? . . .

JOYZELLE.

No.

MERLIN.

Do not raise your voice to interrupt a crime which you do not wish to see. . . . They will not hear you; they listen only to the sound of their lips! . . . But turn, Joyzelle, I beseech you! . . . Your life is at stake and all the happiness to which you have a right! . . . Do not reject the proffered truth that comes to save you if you have the courage at last to accept it! It will not return except to make you weep, when it is too late! . . . But look! Look! . . . You need not even turn your head! . . . Your star is kind to you and does not tire! . . . Do not close your eyes, it is coming to unseal them! . . . See! . . . The shadow of their arms, lengthened by the moonlight, is creeping along that arch and covering your knees! . . . Open your eyes! Look! . . . It is coming to defy you, it is rising to your lips! . . .

JOYZELLE.

No.

[*A pause.*

MERLIN.

I understand you, Joyzelle. . . . You must not deny what remains of your love while I am here. . . . I leave you to yourself, face to face with your duty, face to face with your destiny. . . . Such sacrifices ask for no witnesses: they demand silence. . . . The truth is there; it is cowardly to fly from it. . . . You will know how to face it when you are alone. . . . There is yet time. . . . I admire you, Joyzelle. . . . Your life and your happiness invoke your courage and depend upon a glance. . . .

[*Exit* MERLIN. JOYZELLE, *for a long moment, remains seated on the bank, motionless, with wide-open eyes, staring fixedly before her. Then she rises, draws herself up and goes out slowly, without turning her head.*

ACT IV

A Room in the Palace

[*At the back, to the right, is a large marble bed, on which* LANCÉOR *is lying lifeless.* JOYZELLE, *anxious, dishevelled, is busying herself around him.*

JOYZELLE.

Lancéor! Lancéor! . . . He cannot hear me. . . . His eyes are wide open. . . . Lancéor, I am here, I am bending over your eyes. . . . Look at me, look at me! . . . No, he does not see me! . . . Lancéor, for pity's sake! . . . If your voice is too weak, give a sign of life! . . . I take you in my arms, my arms that love you! . . . Come, come, come to yourself, in our great love! . . . See, see, it is my hands that are lifting your head. . . . Do you recognize my hands, as they stroke your hair? . . . You so often told me, when we were happy,

that the least caress of these dear hands would recall your soul, even from the greatest happiness of paradise, from the greatest darkness in the depths of . . . No, no, it is not there! . . . But his head is drooping, his arm falls back lifeless and his fingers seem to me colder than this marble. . . . (*Mechanically feeling one of the columns of the bed.*) No, it is not that. . . . But I must know. . . . And his eyes are no longer . . . (*Raising his head.*) Is it his or mine that are so dim? . . . No, it is impossible! . . . No, no, I will not have it! Ah, I will open your lips! . . . (*She places her lips on* LANCÉOR'S.) Lancéor! Lancéor! All the ardour of my life shall enter your heart! . . . Do not fear, do not fear! It is the saving flame and life that restores life! . . . Breathe it all in the last efforts of my breath which loves you! . . . I would gladly suffocate in exchanging my life for yours! . . . I give you my strength, my hours, my years! . . . Here they are, here they are! . . . You have but to make a movement, to open your lips! . . . It must be so! . . . It must be possible thus to give new life to those whom

we love better than ourselves! . . . When we give them all, they cannot but take it! . . . (*Raising her head to look at* LANCÉOR.) He is falling back! He is going from me! . . . (*Infatuated, she takes him in her arms again.*) Help! . . . No, this is too much! . . . Help! Hasten! Hasten! . . . Ah no, I know better, no, no, it is not that. . . . Death does not come like this when love threatens it! . . . No, no, I fear nothing, no, no, I will not have it! . . . But I am crying for help! I cannot remain alone, I cannot fight alone against all the strength of death approaching! . . . If no one comes, it will end by conquering! . . . Help, I say! . . . You must come to my aid! . . . Life must help me, or it is no longer possible and we shall succumb! . . .

[*She falls sobbing on* LANCÉOR'S *lifeless body. Enter* MERLIN.

MERLIN.

I am here, Joyzelle. . . .

JOYZELLE.

(*Starting up, as though to go to him, while still holding* LANCÉOR *in a close embrace.*) Ah, it is you! . . . So it is you! . . . At last here is help and life coming! . . . Look at him! See! . . . It is time, he is falling back! . . . I fling myself at your feet! . . . Yes, yes, you can do all; and I have seen clear in all things! . . . Ah, at such moments as this, one would see clear in the depths of a darkness which worlds have never traversed! . . . Oh, I entreat you, tell me what to do! . . . I am no longer Joyzelle, I am no longer fierce and I have no more pride. . . . I am broken and dead: I drag myself at your feet; and it is no more a question of this or that, of love or kisses, or of trifling things! . . . Life and death stand face to face, they are fighting under our eyes and must be separated. . . . You do not move a step! . . . Ah, I know how great your hatred is and how you detest that defenceless man! . . . Yes, you are right, he is anything you please, he is a coward, he is a rascal, he

is your enemy, he is a twenty-fold traitor, since you will have it so! . . . Yes, I admit it, I was wrong, I confess it, and I no longer love him, since you wish it, and I am ready for anything, provided he be saved! . . . But that must be done and that counts and all the rest is madness! . . . But come, come, come, I tell you death is triumphing and will carry him off! . . . See, his hands are turning blue and his eyes are growing dull and it is horrible! . . .

MERLIN.

Joyzelle, fear nothing; his life is in my hands and I will save him, if you wish me to save him. . . .

JOYZELLE.

If I wish you to save him! . . . But do you not see that, if you were to hesitate, do you not know that, if for his sake, I had to . . . No, no, I meant to say . . . my distress bewilders me. . . . He has ceased to breathe, I no longer hear his heart. . . . You seem to me so slow! . . . Do you think that there is no danger, no

need for haste? . . . I will speak no more; I am making you lose minutes which perhaps were passing to save him. . . . If you will not help him yourself—and I can understand that, for you do not love him—tell me only what I must do to assist him; and I shall know how to do it. . . . But I can see, I am sure that he cannot wait and that we must make haste. . . .

MERLIN.

I have told you, Joyzelle, his life is in my hands and cannot escape without my consent. I warned you of it. The poison is doing its work and I can see it. I alone can cure him, snatch him from death, call back his vigour, his beauty, which are fading away, and restore him to you as he was before. . . .

JOYZELLE.

Ah, I entreat you, do not dally thus! . . . What is his beauty to me, if his life escapes us? . . . Give him back to me as he is, whatever he may be, what care I, if only I have him back, if only he breathes! . . .

MERLIN.

Yes, I will give him back to you. I have already twice done—and each time repented—what I will do again for the last time, since you ask it: but it is a sacrifice which none but you could have obtained. By restoring his life, I risk my own. To rouse his strength, to recall his soul, I must give him a part of my strength, a part of my soul. It may be that he will take from me more than I have left and that I shall fall dead beside the rival whom I shall have restored to life. . . . Time was when I would thus risk my existence to save a stranger by the wayside, almost without hesitating and without asking anything in exchange. . . . But to-day I am more prudent and more wise. As I am offering my life, it is but fair that I should be paid for it and paid in advance; and I will give it to him only if you promise me the dearest moment of your own. . . .

JOYZELLE.

How? . . . What am I to do? . . .

MERLIN.

(*Aside.*) O poor and all too innocent child! . . . And you, my chaste thoughts, oh, take no part in the odious words which my voice must now spread around their love! . . . I blush at the proof and am ashamed of what I am now compelled to say. . . . You will forgive me when you know all. . . . It is not I that speak: it is the future, which man ought not to know, the shameless, pitiless future, which reveals a day and throws light upon a destiny only to conceal the rest and which wishes that I should know whether you are she whom it marks out. . . .

JOYZELLE.

What are you saying? . . . Why do you hesitate? . . . There is nothing in the world; examine myself as I may, I see nothing in the world, in our world or in the other, that I could be asked and not be ready to . . .

MERLIN.

See, I will cease talking in riddles. . . . That man whom you see and whom you hold

pressed in your arms lies stretched as near death as though he were laid on the slab of his tomb. . . . A movement can bring him back to life; a movement can make him fall on the other side. . . . Well, at the very moment when you say yes and before the echo which slumbers yonder under those marble vaults has time to repeat that you have consented, I will make the certain movement which will snatch him from the darkness, provided that you promise to come to-night, here, in this room in which I shall restore him to you and on this same bed over which you are leaning, to give yourself to me, without shame, without reserve. . . .

JOYZELLE.

I? . . . Give myself to you? . . .

MERLIN.

Yes.

JOYZELLE.

I, give myself to you, when he is restored to me? . . .

MERLIN.

So that he may be restored to you.

JOYZELLE.

No, I have not understood. . . . There are words, no doubt, which I do not understand. . . . No, it is not possible that a man who is not one of the princes of hell should come thus, at the moment when all love's sorrow knows not what to hope for nor what to undertake. . . . No, I have mistaken you and I am doing you an injury. . . . You must forgive me, I am a virgin, I am ignorant, I do not quite know what those words imply. . . . But I see now. . . . Yes, you are right. . . . Yes, yes, you mean to say that it is fair that I should bear a share of the danger and that my life should be joined for a moment to yours, in order to create the other life which is to revive him. . . . But I want that share, I want it for myself alone, I want the whole of it, the greatest possible share, and I never hoped that it could be given me. . . .

MERLIN.

Joyzelle, time presses. . . . Do not seek elsewhere: you know what I am asking and the word means all that you dare not believe. . . .

JOYZELLE.

Then, at the very moment when he comes back to me, when I see him once more breathing in my arms and smiling at the love which he will have found again, I shall have to snatch from him all that I have given? . . . But what remains for him if you take everything from us; and what shall I tell him when he kisses me? . . .

MERLIN.

You will tell him nothing, if you wish for his happiness. . . .

JOYZELLE.

But I must tell him everything, since I love him! . . . No, no, I can see clearly, that cannot be, that does not exist; and there must be gods or demons to prevent such things: if not, I

cannot see why one should wish to live. . . . I have confidence in them, I have confidence in you. . . . It was only a proof; and all this is not, cannot be real. . . . It seems to me that already you look at me with less ill-will. . . . See, I beseech you, I throw myself at your feet and kiss your hands. . . . I will confess all to you. . . . I did not love you, you hated him too much; but I never believed that you were unjust or unworthy of love. . . . When you came in, I did not hesitate, I went up to you, I asked you to snatch from death the only man I love; and yet I knew that you love me too. . . . But, I do not know why, my instinct told me that you were generous and capable of doing what I would have done for you, what he himself would have done; and, when you have done what we would have done, you shall have in our hearts a part of our love that is not the least good part, nor the least fine, nor the most perishable. . . .

MERLIN.

Yes, I know: when I have given him back his life, at the risk of my own, he will have the

kisses, the lips and the eyes, the days and the nights, all, in short, that forms love's vain and ephemeral happiness! . . . But I, I shall have something much better; and sometimes, by chance, in passing, I shall be vouchsafed a kindly smile, which will not perish, provided that I refrain from demanding it too often. . . . No, Joyzelle, at my age we are no longer satisfied with illusions of that kind nor with those deceptive dregs. The hour of heroic falsehoods is past for me. I wish to have what he will have. I care little for your smile, which I know to be impossible: I want yourself; I want you absolutely, were it only for a moment; but I shall have that moment: he will give it me. . . . (*Approaching* LANCÉOR.) Look at him, Joyzelle: his features are becoming distorted; we have waited too long and the danger increases with each minute that passes. . . . Will you come? . . .

JOYZELLE.

(*Casting a bewildered glance around her.*) Nothing bursts, nothing falls and I am alone in the world! . . .

MERLIN.

(*Feeling* LANCÉOR'S *body.*) The danger is becoming grave.... I know the symptoms....

JOYZELLE.

Well, then, yes, I will come! . . . I will come to-night! I will come this evening! . . . But save him first and restore him to life! . . . See, his eyes are hollowing and his lips are fading and I stand here bargaining for his life, as though it were a question of . . .

MERLIN.

He shall be restored to you; but remember, Joyzelle, if you are not true to your promise, the hand that cures him will strike him mercilessly. . . .

JOYZELLE.

But I shall be true to it and I would go on my knees to the end of the other world to remain true to it! . . . Ah, I will come, I tell you! I give myself absolutely and I am wholly yours! . . . What more do you want? . . . I have nothing left! . . .

MERLIN.

It is well; I have your promise; I will fulfil mine.... (*Aside, taking* LANCÉOR *in his arms.*) Forgive me, my son, in the name of your destiny, which demands this torture.... (*He leans over* LANCÉOR *and presses a long kiss on his eyelids and lips. Aloud.*) See, he returns from the regions without light.... Life is restored to him, but he will awake only in your eager arms. I leave you to your work. Remember your word....

[*Exit* MERLIN. JOYZELLE *has taken* LANCÉOR *in her arms and looks at him in anguish. Soon her lover's eyes half open and his hands move feebly.*

JOYZELLE.

Lancéor!... His eyes have opened and closed again and I saw the light bathe in their blue! And here are his hands, which seem to seek mine!... Here they are, Lancéor, here they are in your own, which are no longer frozen!... They dare not leave them, lest

they should lose them; and yet I would support your shoulder and embrace your neck which droops upon my breast. . . . Ah, all the good things are returning and returning together! . . . I hear his heart beat, I breathe his breath: they took all away from me, but they have given it all back! . . . Listen to me, Lancéor: I want to see you, I am looking for your face, do not hide your forehead in my hair, which loves you; my eyes love you still more and want their share too! . . . (LANCÉOR *lifts his head a little.*) Oh, he has heard me and listened to me! . . . He is here, he is here, there is no doubt of it now, he is here, before me, more living than life! . . . He is here before me and the roses of dawn and the flowers of awakening have brought colour to his cheeks and are covering his smile, for he smiles already as though he saw me! . . . Ah, the gods are too good! . . . They have pity on men! . . . There are skies that open! There are gods of love! There are gods of life! . . . We must thank them and love one another, since they also love! . . . Come, come, come to my arms; your eyes still seek me, but your lips find me. . . . They

open at last to call to mine; and mine are here, carrying all love! . . .

[*A pause; she kisses him long and eagerly.*

LANCÉOR.

(*Recovering consciousness.*) Joyzelle. . . .

JOYZELLE.

Yes, yes, it is I, it is I; look at me, look! . . . Here are my hands, my forehead, my hair, my shoulder. . . . And here are my kisses, which yours recognize! . . .

LANCÉOR.

Yes, it is you, it is indeed you, it is you and the light. . . . And then this room, too, which I saw before. . . . Wait a little. . . . What happened to me? . . . I remember, I remember. . . . I was lying yonder, yonder, I know not where, before great doors which some one was trying to open. . . . I was buried and was turning cold. . . . And then I called to you, I called without ceasing and you did not come. . . .

JOYZELLE.

But I did, I came, I was there, I was there! . . .

LANCÉOR.

No, you were not there. . . . I was seized with icy coldness, I was seized with darkness and I was losing my life. . . . But now it is you! . . . Yes, yes, my eyes see you, they behold you suddenly as they emerge from the dark. . . . Scared though they be by the glaring light, it is you they see and I am passing from the tomb to the joy of the sunlight in the arms of love! That seems impossible to one coming from so far! . . . I must touch you, I must cling to the caresses of your hands, to the light of your eyes, I must seize the real gold of the hair that bears witness to the daylight! . . . Oh, you could never believe how one loves when dying, nor how I mean to love you after losing you and finding you again! . . .

JOYZELLE.

I too I too! . . .

LANCÉOR.

And the joy of returning to the arms which press one and which still tremble, because they had ceased to hope! . . . Do you feel yours quiver and mine adore you? . . . They seek, they enlace one another, they fear lest they should lose one another, they no longer dare to open. . . . They no longer obey, they do not know that they are hurting us and are like to stifle us in their blind intoxication! . . . Ah, they know at last the worth of clasping a glowing body; and one would die to learn life and to know love! . . .

JOYZELLE.

Yes, one would die. . . .

LANCÉOR.

It is strange: when I was down there, in the frozen region, some one approached whom I thought I recognized. . . .

JOYZELLE.

It was he.

LANCÉOR.

Who?

JOYZELLE.

The lord of the island.

LANCÉOR.

He? . . . But he hated me. . . .

JOYZELLE.

It was he.

LANCÉOR.

I do not quite understand. . . . Did he then bring me back to love, to life? . . . Was he willing to restore me to her who loved me and whom he loved himself? . . .

JOYZELLE.

Yes.

LANCÉOR.

But why did he do it? . . .

JOYZELLE.

I besought him until he consented.

LANCÉOR.

Did he hesitate?

JOYZELLE.

Yes.

LANCÉOR.

Why?

JOYZELLE.

He said that, in saving your life, he risked his own.

LANCÉOR.

Nothing compelled him to it. . . . And then, quite simply, he gave back life to the only man who is taking away all hope of the love that would make the happiness of his life? . . .

JOYZELLE.

Yes.

LANCÉOR.

And without asking anything, from kindness, from pity, from generosity? . . .

JOYZELLE.

Yes.

LANCÉOR.

Ah, we were unjust and our worst enemies are better than we believe! . . . There are treasures of nobility and love even in the heart of hatred! . . . And this thing which he has done! . . . No, I really do not know that I could have done

as much; and I would never have thought that that poor old man. . . . But is it not almost incredible, Joyzelle, and is it not heroic? . . .

JOYZELLE.

Yes.

LANCÉOR.

Where is he? We must go and fling ourselves at his feet, confess our error, wipe out the injustice of which we were guilty when we did not love him. . . . He must have his part and the best part of the happiness which he restores to us! . . . He must have our hearts, our joy, our smiles and our tears of love, all that one can give to those who give all! . . .

JOYZELLE.

We will go, we will go. . . .

LANCÉOR.

Joyzelle, what is it? . . . You scarcely answer me. . . . I do not know if my senses are still in the power of the night whence I am issuing, but I do not recognize your words and your movements. . . . You seem to be seeking, doubting, dreaming. . . . And I, who

return to you full of love and joy, find so little of either in your eyes, which avoid me, in your hands, which forget me. . . . What has happened? Why recall me and restore me to life, if, during my absence, I have lost what I love? . . .

JOYZELLE.

Oh no, no, Lancéor, you have not lost me! . . .

LANCÉOR.

Your voice seeks a smile and finds but a sob. . . .

JOYZELLE.

Yes, I wanted to smile and I am smiling now. . . . But do not be surprised: I have wept so long and so desperately that the tears still rise in spite of myself. . . . Joy was so far away that it could not return with the first kisses. . . . It will need many before it recovers confidence in my heart; and I am almost sad in the midst of my happiness. . . .

LANCÉOR.

Oh, my poor Joyzelle! . . . Is that what your grave silence means? . . . And I was distressing myself like a stupid child! . . . I am

thinking only of myself, I am drunk with life and understand nothing. . . . I was forgetting that in your place I should have lost courage. . . . It is true, you are right, it is you, not I, returning from death; and, when two beings love as we do, the one that does not die is the only one that really dies. . . . Do not hide your tears. . . . The sadder you appear, the more I feel that you love me. . . . Now it is for me to take care of you, now it is for me to call back your soul, to warm your disconcerted hands, to pursue your lips and bring you back to the midst of the happiness which we had lost. . . . We shall soon be there, since love is our guide. . . . It triumphs over everything when it finds two hearts that give themselves to it fearlessly and without reserve. . . . All the rest is nothing, all the rest is forgotten, all the rest withdraws to make way for love. . . .

JOYZELLE.

(*Staring fixedly before her.*) All the rest withdraws to make way for love. . . .

ACT V

SCENE I.—*A Gallery in the Palace.*

[*Enter* MERLIN *and* LANCÉOR.

LANCÉOR.

Father! . . . Then it is true, and you are my father! . . . And indeed it seems to me, since you told me, as though I had always known it in my far-seeing heart. . . . (*Coming closer.*) But how wonderful it is! . . . I see you again at last as I saw you amid my childish sports; and, when I look at you, I see myself in a graver, nobler and more powerful mirror than those which reflect my features along this room. But what will Joyzelle say? . . . How she will laugh when she remembers her fears, for she imagined . . . No, she herself shall tell you what she thought, to punish her for her senseless terror. . . . She used to hate you, but with a softened

hatred that already smiled like one about to be pierced by the rays of love. . . . But where is she hiding? I have been seeking her for nearly two hours in vain. . . . Have you seen her? I must tell her at once of the unspeakable happiness which this evening has brought us. . . .

MERLIN.

Not yet. I must remain in her eyes, until the close of the day, the pitiless tyrant whom she curses in her heart. My poor, dear child! . . . How I have tortured your adorable love! . . . But I have already told you the object of these proofs. . . . In making you suffer, I have but been the instrument of fate and the unworthy slave of another will, whose source I do not know, which seems to demand that the slightest happiness should be surrounded by tears. . . . I have but hastened, in order to bring happiness more quickly, the coming of those tears which hung in suspense between your two destinies. . . . You shall know some day by

what power, a power which has no magical or supernatural quality, but which still lies hidden at the bottom of men's lives, I at times command certain phenomena, certain appearances that bewildered you. You shall also learn that I have acquired the gift, often a useless one, of reading the future a little more clearly and a little further than the rest of men. . . . And so I saw you, groping for each other, in time and space, for an unparalleled love, the most perfect perhaps that the two or three centuries over which my eyes have turned concealed within their shade. . . . You might have met each other after many wanderings; but it was necessary to hasten the expected meeting, because of you, my son, whom death claimed in the absence of love. . . . And, on the other side, nothing marked out Joyzelle for the hoped-for love, save a few scattered and uncertain points and the proofs themselves which she was to surmount. I therefore hurried on the prescribed proofs: they have all been painful, but necessary; the last will be decisive and more serious. . . .

LANCÉOR.

Serious? . . . What do you mean? . . . It will not be dangerous for Joyzelle, or for others? . . .

MERLIN.

It will not be dangerous for Joyzelle, but it imperils, for the last time, the predestined love to which your life is linked. . . . That is why, in despite of all, in despite of my confidence, of my anticipations, of my certainty even, I am afraid, I tremble a little at the approach of the decisive hour. . . .

LANCÉOR.

If Joyzelle is to decide, love has nothing to fear. . . . Come, do not hesitate, Joyzelle will always be the source of joy. . . . But I do not understand how, knowing the future, you are not able to see her triumph beforehand? . . .

MERLIN.

I already told you, before we came in here, that Joyzelle can change the future which

she faces. . . . She possesses a force which I have seen in none save her; that is why I do not know whether the great victory which your love expects will not be mingled with some little shadow and tears. . . .

LANCÉOR.

What do you mean? . . . You seem perturbed. . . . What are you hiding from me? . . . How can you believe that Joyzelle would ever be the cause of a tear or the cause of a shadow? . . . There is nothing in Joyzelle, not even the suffering which she might inflict, there is nothing in her but brings health, happiness and love! . . . Ah, how well I see that you know little of the living triumph, the endless dawn contained in her voice, her eyes, her heart! . . . One must have held her in his arms to know what treasures of hope, what torrents of certainty issue from the least word murmured by her lips, from the slightest smile that plays upon her face. . . . But I am too long delaying the impatient victory. Go, father, go. . . . I will

remain here, I will wait, I will watch the happy moments pass, until my Joyzelle utters a great cry of joy which shall tell me that love has determined destiny. . . .

[MERLIN *embraces* LANCÉOR *and exit slowly.*

SCENE II.—*The same room as in Act IV. The moon lights it with its blue radiance.*

[*On the right,* MERLIN *is seated on the great marble bed.* ARIELLE *is kneeling at the head of the bed, on the steps of the dais that supports it.*

MERLIN.

Arielle, the hour is striking and Joyzelle is approaching. . . . I have made the sacrifice of my useless life; and yet I would that my death, if possible, should not come to sadden the most ardent and innocent love that the world has known. . . . But you tremble, you weep, you hide from me your eyes swollen with tears. . . . What do you see, my child, that you contemplate with so great a dread? . . .

ARIELLE.

Master, I beseech you, abandon this proof: there is yet time! . . . My eyes cannot see through the mist that surrounds it. . . . It may be mortal, I see it, I feel it; and chance has placed our two lives in the hand of a blind and infatuated virgin. . . . I do not want to die! . . . There are other outlets. . . . I have always served you as your very thought. . . . But to-day I am afraid, I can follow you no longer. . . . You well know that my death is the echo of yours. . . . Abandon this: we will look elsewhere, in the future; and we can still escape the danger. . . .

MERLIN.

I cannot abandon the last proof. . . . It is for you to see that it does not turn to disaster. It is for you to grasp the as yet uncertain weapon which Joyzelle is preparing to raise against us. . . .

ARIELLE.

But I do not know that I shall succeed! . . . Joyzelle's strength is so swift, so profound,

that it escapes my arm, escapes my eyes, escapes destiny! . . . I see only the flash of falling steel. . . . All is confused in a shadow; and my life and yours depend on a movement of my unskilful hand. . . .

MERLIN.

She is there, I hear her, she is feeling for the door. . . . Be obedient and silent; I am obedient too. Watch and be quick and strong. . . . I will close my eyes and await my fate. . . .

ARIELLE.

(*Dismayed and maddened.*) Abandon the proof! . . . I cannot go through with it!. . . . I refuse! . . . I want to fly! . . .

MERLIN.

(*Imperiously.*) Silence! . . .

[*He stretches himself on the bed, closes his eyes and appears to be sleeping soundly.* ARIELLE, *overcome by her sobs, sinks down on the steps of the dais. On the left, at the opposite end*

of the room, a little door opens and JOYZELLE *enters, wrapped in a long cloak and carrying a lamp in her hand. She takes two or three steps and stops.* ARIELLE *rises and stands invisible behind the heavy curtains at the foot of the bed.*

JOYZELLE.

(*Stopping, haggard, hesitating, trembling.*) Now and here. . . . I have taken the last step. . . . Until this moment, which time can no longer keep back and which is about to see a thing that will never be wiped out; until I came to that little door which has just closed upon two captive destinies, I knew, I knew all that I had to do. . . . Ah, I had reflected and I had judged so well! . . . There was nothing but that, there was nothing else: it was certain, it was just, it was inevitable! . . . But now all changes and I have forgotten all. . . . There are other powers, there are other voices and I am all alone against all that speaks in the uncertain night. . . . Justice, where are you? . . . Justice, what must I do? . . . I shall

act because you wished it. . . . You convinced me and urged me on. . . . There, but now, under the thousands of stars which shone upon the door and which you invoked to reassure my soul! . . . There was no doubt, then, and all the certainty of all that breathes and of all that quivers and of all that loves and has a right to love illumined my heart! . . . But, in face of the deed, you yourself draw back, you deny your laws and abandon me! . . . Ah, I feel too much alone, delivered like a blind slave to the unknown. . . . I shall walk without looking . . . I see nothing and I shall not raise my mad eyes to the bed until the moment when the thing . . . (*She advances with a mechanical step to the foot of the bed.*) Now, fate itself shall say yes. . . . (*She lifts the lamp, looks at the bed, sees* MERLIN *sleeping and, in her surprise, takes a step back.*) He sleeps! . . . What is this? . . . I had not foreseen. . . . Anything but this. . . . Must I wait still? . . . Oh, I should like to wait! . . . He is sound asleep. . . . Then he did not wish. . . . But, if he were not asleep, I could not have done it. . . . He would have disarmed me,

he would have mastered me. . . . It must be true, it is fate, it is a good and just fate that delivers him to me thus. . . . I, who was looking for a sign! . . . But there is the sign! . . . What more do I want, if I want anything more? . . . And yet, as he is asleep, I cannot know. . . . Perhaps he has pity, perhaps he renounces and would bid me go! . . . He was not without soul; and often, at moments, he spoke like a father. . . . Ah, if he had risen, if he had been there, with arms held out to me, in an attitude of . . . Then, then I should have been strong and should have conquered! . . . But a man asleep. . . . That shatters hatred. . . . And then, one no longer knows. . . . And to change this sleep which one word puts to flight into that which no human or superhuman power can disturb! . . . Oh, I would at least that one word of forgiveness . . . Ah no, I am too great a coward! . . . This is terror seeking an outlet. . . . I did not come for further meditation. . . . There is no doubt, after what he did, after what he said! . . . I listen only to my voice, the voice of my destiny, which wills that I should save us both! . . . So much the

worse if I am wrong! . . . I am right! I am right! . . . Go out, my lamp: I have seen all that I need see. . . . (*She puts out the lamp, places it on one of the marble stairs, seizes the dagger which she held concealed, raises it and looks at it for a moment.*) Now, it is your turn! . . . Ah, if you could do what my thought, what my desperate pity would have, and if the death that gleams at the point of this blade were not real death, irrevocable death! . . . But enough. . . . It is time. . . . It is said, it is done, I strike! . . .

[*She raises the dagger to strike* MERLIN. ARIELLE, *invisible, seizes her wrist and, without apparent effort, paralyzes her gesture. At the same moment,* MERLIN *opens his eyes, smiling, rises and, with a movement of delight, takes* JOYZELLE *tenderly in his arms.*

MERLIN.

It is well! . . . Joyzelle is great and Joyzelle triumphs! . . . She has conquered fate by listening to love; and it is you, my child, whom destiny marks out. . . .

JOYZELLE.

(*Still failing to understand, and struggling.*) No, no, no! . . . I could not. . . . Ah, though my heart fail me, I have courage yet! . . . And I have all my life, if I no longer have my strength, and never, no, never, so long as I have breath. . . .

MERLIN.

Look at me, Joyzelle . . . I am restoring its strength to the arm which you raised in love's defence. . . . I leave it its weapon which tried to strike me and which was striking true. . . . Until that movement, all was undecided; now, all is clear, all is radiant and sure. . . . Look at me, Joyzelle, and no longer fear my lips. . . . They seek your brow, there at last to place the kiss which the father lays on the brow of his daughter. . . .

JOYZELLE.

What is this and what do you mean that I cannot understand? . . . Yes, I see in your eyes that you seem to love me as one loves a

child. . . . So I was mistaken and I was on the point of . . . ?

MERLIN.

No, you were right; you would not have been she whom love demands if you had not done what you were going to do.

JOYZELLE.

I do not know, I am dreaming. . . . But since it is not the abominable thing, I abandon myself to my dream. . . .

MERLIN.

Yes, it is true, my Joyzelle, I am yearning to enjoy your delighted surprise, to follow your glances which seem to me so beautiful in their astonished flight, in which confidence dawns and which no longer know where to rest their wings, like sea-birds that have lost the shore. . . . I am taking my share of the happiness which I bestow. . . . I shall have no other. . . . But do not be anxious, we shall together enter into fate's secrets; and, when Lancéor . . .

JOYZELLE.

Where is he?

MERLIN.

Ah, that name rouses you; and see, the shore appears to those glances lost in space! . . . Listen, I hear him. . . . Your heart, without our knowing it, has gone to tell him that you loved him to the point which love cannot surpass. . . . He is hastening, he is here! . . .

[*The door opens. Enter* LANCÉOR, *followed by* ARIELLE, *invisible.*

LANCÉOR.

Father! . . . She is mine! . . .

MERLIN.

My son, she has triumphed; destiny gives her to you. . . .

LANCÉOR.

(*Taking* JOYZELLE *in his arms and covering her with wild kisses.*) Ah, I knew it and I was sure of it! . . . Joyzelle, my Joyzelle! . . . I do not ask what you can have done to disarm

fate. . . . I know nothing yet; but we know all beforehand who love each other as you and I love; and already I hail the new truth that must have been revealed at the first touch of your heart! . . . Ah, father, father, I told you, I told you! . . . But she does not understand why I am embracing you. . . . It is true, I go too fast. . . . Come here, Joyzelle, that I may unite you both in my arms. . . . We had with us an enemy who loves us; he was obliged to make us suffer; and that gentle enemy was my own father, whom I thought lost, my father here, my father found again, who awaits but a smile to embrace you too. . . . Oh, do not turn away, do not look at me with those eyes already laden with reproaches. . . . I have hidden nothing from you. . . . I knew it to-day, this evening, the moment you left me; and, so soon as I knew it, I had to fly far from you, lest I should betray myself, for all our happiness, it appears, depended on this [illegible] secret; and, when a secret is committed to love, it is as though one hid a lighted lamp in a crystal vase. . . . You would have learnt all merely by seeing my eyes, my hands, my very

shadow; and I could not show you my happiness. . . . You were not to know of it till the great proof. . . . It was necessary that you should do an impossible thing. . . . What thing I do not know; but, smile as I might, I had to yield; I had to wait and patiently count the minutes of the hour which thus separated our two impatient passions. . . . But now, I hasten, I listen, I want to know. . . . Speak, speak, I am listening. . . .

JOYZELLE.

Since you are happy, I am happy, too. . . . I know nothing more. . . . I have scarce awakened from a horrible and incomprehensible dream. . . .

MERLIN.

Yes, my poor Joyzelle, the dream was horrible; but now it is overcome and the proof is past, establishing a happiness which nothing threatens now, except the enemy that threatens all men. . . .

LANCÉOR.

But what, when all is told, was that fearful proof? . . .

MERLIN.

Joyzelle will tell you in the first kisses, free from all anxiety, which you will exchange after this victory. They will veil better than my poor words what, in this proof, appears unpardonable. . . . The proof was dangerous and almost insurmountable. . . . Joyzelle could have chosen a different course. . . . She might have yielded, sacrificed herself, sacrificed her love, despaired, I know not what! . . . She would not have been the Joyzelle that was expected. . . . There was but one path traced by destiny; she entered upon it, followed it to the end and saved your life in saving her own love. . . .

JOYZELLE.

It is ordained, then, that love strikes and kills all that tries to bar its way? . . .

MERLIN.

No, Joyzelle, I do not know. . . . Let us not make laws with a few scraps picked up in the darkness that surrounds our thoughts. . . . But she who was to do what you were willing to do was she whom fate intended for my son. . . . It was therefore written, for you and for you alone and perhaps for those who resemble you a little, that they have a right to the love which fate points out to them; and that that love must break down injustice. . . . I do not judge you: it is fate that approves you; but I am overjoyed that it has thus chosen you among all women. . . .

JOYZELLE.

Father! . . . I tremble still when I see that weapon which, for a moment . . . Forgive me, father, I loved you already. . . .

MERLIN.

It is I who ask you now to offer me a forgiving hand. . . .

JOYZELLE.

No, no, these are not the cold hands of forgiveness! . . . These are the hands that caress, worship and give thanks! . . . I know now why, despite my hatred, I could not hate! . . . What you have done was more difficult than all that I have done, because it was cruel; and, when I think again on what has happened, it is you, it is you, father, who have endured the heaviest and the most deserving proof. . . .

MERLIN.

No, the most deserving was not among those which you can discover. . . . It will remain the secret of this heart which loves you both and unites you within itself and which, to change this too-deep secret into happiness, asks my two children for but a moment of their joy and perhaps for a kiss a little longer than those granted in passing to old men whose time on earth is short. . . .

LANCÉOR.

(*Throwing himself in* MERLIN'S *arms.*) Father! . . .

JOYZELLE.

(*Also embracing* MERLIN.) My father too! . . .

ARIELLE.

(*Trying to mingle with the closely entwined group.*) No one sees me and no one thinks of giving me my share of the love snatched by my invisible hands from the miserly hands of the days and years. . . .

MERLIN.

(*Smiling.*) I see you, Arielle: you love all three of us; but a more ardent kiss ascends towards Joyzelle than those which you give to us. . . . There, kiss her; the proof is finished in my old heart too. . . . Yet a little while and we shall be far from her and far from all love. . . .

[ARIELLE *kisses* JOYZELLE *long and slowly.*

JOYZELLE.

What are you saying, father, and to whom are you speaking? . . . It seems as though flowers which I cannot gather were lightly touching my forehead and caressing my lips. . . .

MERLIN.

Do not repel them, they are sad and pure.... It is my poor Arielle who spreads them over you; it is my invisible daughter, the good fairy of the island, who discovered and protected you and Lancéor. She wishes to mingle, for the last time, in your great love and asks for a share, as discreet as herself, of the happiness which we owe her. . . .

JOYZELLE.

Where is she? . . . I see no one near but you and Lancéor. . . .

MERLIN.

And do you think, my child, that we see all that lives deep down in our lives? . . . Be kind and gentle to poor Arielle. . . . She is now giving you a parting kiss before going far away to disappear with me in the regions where fate wills that my destiny should be fulfilled. . . .

LANCÉOR.

To disappear with you? . . . Father, I do not know. . . .

MERLIN.

Let us not question those who have nothing more to say. . . . All is now determined. . . . Thanks to the unknown gods, I have been able to give happiness to the two hearts that were dearest to me; but I can do no more, nor can you do anything, for my own happiness. . . . I am going towards my destiny and I go in silence, lest I should sadden this smiling hour, which is yours alone. . . ., I know what awaits me; and nevertheless I am going. . . .

JOYZELLE.

No, no, no, no, father, you shall not go! . . . We are around you, and if some danger which we cannot see threatens your old age, we shall try at least to alleviate the dread of it. . . . When there are three to undergo a misfortune and those three love one another, then the misfortune changes to a burden of love, which we bear with delight. . . .

MERLIN.

Alas, no, my Joyzelle: it would all be useless! . . . Would to the gods that men had to pass only through kindly evils, as yours were! . . . But all life's secret purposes are not so clear, are not so good. . . . But we speak in vain of what is written. . . . I am still here, in the arms of those who love me. . . . The day of my distress is not this day. . . . Let us enjoy our hour, in the sweet sadness that follows on great joys, by listening to our minutes of love, passing and fleeting, one by one, in that frail ray of nocturnal light in which we clasp one another for our greater happiness. . . . The rest does not as yet belong to men. . . .

CURTAIN.

APPENDIX I

(ACT III., SCENE II., *p.* 75). *If this transfiguration of* MERLIN'S *cannot be realized in a satisfactory manner on the stage, it may be easily avoided by cutting, on pp.* 77 *to* 81, *all that follows on* JOYZELLE'S *exclamation. The scene will then be as follows:*

JOYZELLE.

(*Waking with a start.*) Lancéor! . . . (*Recognizing* MERLIN, *with a movement of horror.*) You! . . .

MERLIN.

Yes, it is I: the proof is grave and sad, &c.

(*The rest as on pp.* 81 *to* 85.)

APPENDIX II

(ACT V., SCENE II., *pp.* 130 *to* 133). *Should there be a fear of "tedious passages" (as Villiers de L'isle-Adam said,* "To be or not to be" *and, generally speaking, all Hamlet's speeches would be described to-day as "tedious passages"), the* dénouement *could be hastened on, beginning with* ARIELLE'S *speech* (*p.* 130), *as follows:*

ARIELLE.

(*Who has remained standing at the foot of the bed; in a sad and solemn voice.*) Master!

MERLIN.

I see you, Arielle, and I will obey. . . .

JOYZELLE.

What are you saying, father, and to whom are you speaking?